



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
1000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20350-1000

SECNAVINST 5724.3A
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SECNAV INSTRUCTION 5724.3A

From: Secretary of the Navy

Subj: FLEET HOMETOWN NEWS PROGRAM POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 5720.44B
(b) U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual M5728.2C
(c) SECNAVINST 5211.5D
(d) BUPERSINST 1770.3

Encl: (1) Fleet Hometown News program form (NAVSO 5724/1, Rev 4-04)

1. Purpose. To establish policies for the Fleet Hometown News (FHTN) program and to provide instructions and guidance for participation. This instruction is a guide for all commands and activities to make accurate and appropriate submissions to the FHTN program, so the FHTN Center (FHTNC) may generate factual releases on Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel. All commanders, commanding officers, and officers-in-charge are required to make the FHTN program available to military personnel and to encourage participation in the program. This instruction has been administratively revised and should be reviewed in its entirety.

2. Cancellation. SECNAVINST 5724.3.

3. Mission. By mutual agreement with the Commandant of the Coast Guard, this instruction is also applicable to all Coast Guard commands, organizations, and activities in accordance with references (a) and (b). Director, Fleet Public Affairs Center (FPAC), under the direction of the Navy Chief of Information, administers the tri-service program. FPAC headquarters is located on board Naval Station Norfolk, VA. The goal of the FHTN program is to generate public awareness of the accomplishments of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel by distributing news releases and photographs to the hometown news media of individual service members. Hometown news media include, but are not limited to, newspapers, radio and television stations, and college/university alumni publications throughout the United States and its territories and their respective websites.

4. Background

a. The FHTN program exists to build the morale of our sea service personnel, and helps foster public support and understanding of the missions of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The program also informs the American public of the accomplishments and activities of individual service members.

b. FHTNC is the collection and dissemination point for the Fleet Hometown News program, delivering news articles throughout the nation about service personnel in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The FHTNC gathers information from commands; screens and edits the content; and then distributes news releases to news media in the hometown of service members and their families. The center processes hundreds of thousands of articles per year. The main sources that enable the capability of placing the thousands of articles each year are, however, the unit commanders in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

(1) The easiest, most effective and economical way to recognize the accomplishments of our service members is through the FHTN program, which uses the element of the hometown tie to attract media attention for routine news releases. No other factor creates more marketability when highlighting personal achievements than a community's local tie with a service member. Each news release form generates an average of five news releases. Releases come in the form of short, roster stories that apply to all individuals in a unit (hold file stories) and short stories that apply to individuals only (e.g. reenlistments, promotions, awards).

(2) Although FHTNC releases emphasize the accomplishments and activities of the individual, use of the program is an exceptional way for commanders to educate the American public about a ship or unit deployment, operation, exercise and/or volunteerism.

5. Definitions

a. Hometown. The places of residence of a service member's and spouse's immediate family in the United States and its territories, exclusive of the service member's actual area of residence. Hometown ties may be based on other close relatives,

in-laws or legal guardians, and college/university or location of

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high school. The specific street addresses of family members are not released.

b. Release. Any information provided to news media organizations for print, broadcast, or web release to the general public.

c. Hold file. A collection of FHTN forms completed by individuals in a unit and held in an active status at the FHTNC to generate FHTN releases while the unit is deployed.

(1) Any unit or detachment deployed for 45 days or more or deployed for a high-visibility event (i.e. D-Day Commemoration, Fleet Week, etc.) shall establish a hold file. The file must be established in writing within 30 days prior to the scheduled deployment date and should be verified in writing at least every 60 days throughout the deployment to ensure accurate and newsworthy information is delivered. The hold file shall be provided to the FHTNC where it will be maintained until 60 days after a unit's return from deployment. Hold files for surging units will be kept on file indefinitely.

(2) At a minimum, three news stories will be automatically distributed by the FHTNC during a notional six-month deployment: an initial deployment story, mid-deployment story, and an end-of-deployment story.

(3) With an active hold file maintained at FHTNC, commands can submit master roster stories periodically via their chain of command which can be applied to every individual news release form in the hold file. Additional individual and unit stories may also be released by the FHTNC when the unit Public Affairs Officer (PAO) notifies the FHTNC Hold File Section of newsworthy events such as: major training events, reporting aboard, promotions and advancements, reenlistments, awards and medals, retirements, and completion of resident schools three weeks or more in duration. An up-to-date and active hold file allows a command to take advantage of noteworthy events immediately.

(4) It is imperative that unit hold files are verified periodically with service members prior to the submission of stories. The PAO should report any updates about personnel who have detached from the command or whose status changes, i.e.

promotion, death, injury, arrest, divorce, or change in

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biographical information. Additional release forms should be sent to the FHTNC as necessary.

(5) Detailed instructions on establishing and managing deployed hold files are available in the FHTNC Deployed Hold File Instruction, which can be downloaded at <http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/chinfo/fhtnc/hfhabk.doc>.

6. Policy and procedures

a. In accordance with reference (c), individuals must sign FHTN forms to authorize the release of personal information. FHTN release forms are considered For Official Use Only and may not be used for any other purpose. With the exception of hold files, all forms held by FHTNC are destroyed 90 days after news releases are distributed, in accordance with reference (c).

(1) Commands may duplicate blank FHTN release forms as required. Forms can be downloaded at <http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/chinfo/fhtnc/57241.pdf>.

(2) Forms filled out by individuals who do not want to participate in the FHTN program should not be forwarded. The forms should be clearly marked Do Not Release and maintained in the command's duplicate FHTN file.

b. Zip codes are critical in determining where FHTNC sends news releases. The number of news releases each form generates is dependent upon the correct zip codes in the addresses of family members, schools, etc. A wrong or missing zip code can result in news releases being mailed to the wrong news media or the wrong hometown.

c. A complete and correct UIC/RUC-MCC/OPFAC is critical in tracking news releases and ensuring commands receive credit for the number of news releases generated through the FHTN program.

d. FHTNC sends out electronic, monthly reports to command PAOs. To receive this report, send the command PAO's e-mail address to fhtn@navy.mil.

e. Accurate information on the FHTN release form is key to a successful news release. Commands shall designate a responsible

person to administer their FHTN program and to promote awareness

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of activities and accomplishments of individuals within the command. The FHTN program should be a routine part of all command check-in and checkout procedures, award presentations, reenlistments, advancements, etc.

f. Submission of forms to FHTNC does not prevent commands from pursuing additional news media coverage of their personnel. For example:

(1) Material prepared by recruit training commands concerning special recruit units may be forwarded for release directly to the recruiting activity that enlisted the unit.

(2) Information concerning a member whose hometown is in the immediate geographic area of the command (generally within 50 miles) may be marketed directly to local news media through means specified by the chain of command.

(3) Namesake ties such as direct liaison with Chicago news media for USS CHICAGO (SSN 721) Sailors from the Chicago area. In the case of the Namesake Programs, Navy commands should also coordinate with the Navy Office of Community Outreach (NAVCO), Millington, TN.

(4) Information deemed appropriate may be approved for release by a service member's chain of command to any news media, subject to the instructions of operational or higher-echelon commanders governing media relations. Normally such requests will be coordinated with the appropriate service headquarters, Fleet or type commander, or NAVCO prior to release.

7. Responsibilities

a. Fleet Hometown News Center shall:

(1) Establish and issue procedures and participation in the FHTN program in accordance with the overarching guidance contained in paragraphs 3 through 6 above.

(2) Maintain regular and direct liaison with individual units and activities to assist with program participation, and provide monthly electronic feedback to all units detailing the number of releases distributed.

- (3) Establish and maintain liaison with civilian news
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media and college alumni media to determine the type, format, and scope of material desired.

(4) Maintain direct liaison with the Army/Air Force Hometown News Center on matters of mutual interest.

b. Commanding Officers and Officers-in-Charge shall:

(1) Actively support the FHTN program.

(2) Designate a person to administer the command's FHTN program.

(3) Provide the opportunity for all service members to participate in the FHTN program.

c. Public Affairs Officers shall:

(1) Provide timely and pertinent content for release to the FHTNC.

(2) Ensure each unit member is provided the opportunity to participate in the FHTN program and complete a FHTN release form.

(3) Ensure forms are complete and legible, that service members' full Social Security Numbers are correct (a correct SSN is imperative in the event of the need to verify casualty information), and that forms are signed by the individual and the command representative.

(4) Ensure compliance with reference (c).

(5) In the event of a member's death, injury, transfer or discharge, inform FHTNC by fastest means possible to ensure a release is not sent on an individual who is no longer with the unit. Promptly notify FHTNC of any other changes in the status of an individual that may affect a release; i.e., arrest, divorce, change of address, death or divorce of parents, etc.

(6) For all submissions, maintain a duplicate file of all forwarded FHTN release forms. For hold files, update and certify at least every 60 days in writing to FHTNC. Further administer

hold file as detailed in paragraph 5c above.

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(7) Submit stories under the following guidelines:

(a) Security. It is the responsibility of the participating command to submit the proposed story via the chain of command and to determine what information is releasable. Commands are responsible for ensuring that information submitted for release is accurate and unclassified.

(b) Type of filing

1. Individual. Recognizes specific achievements such as promotions, awards, reporting to or assumption of command, special qualifications, reenlistments or retirements. Single story submissions on completion of schools are acceptable; normally, no news releases are made on personnel reporting for training.

2. Roster. Applies to all members of a unit or command (e.g., a deployment, participation in and exercise or operation, boot camp or training school graduation). A roster story is applicable to all individuals participating, and will be merged at the FHTNC with specific information about each individual (i.e. name, hometown, parents' names, etc.).

8. Casualties. Include FHTNC NORFOLK VA //00// as an info addressee on all personnel casualty messages per references (a) and (e). In the event of an accident/incident causing mass casualties, FHTNC will immediately cease production of associated unit submissions until an accurate account of casualties is determined. It is imperative that the FHTNC be immediately advised in casualty situations in order to notify news media to stop publication of stories that have been recently forwarded. Media are contacted 24 hours after the assigned CACO has notified the next of kin.

9. Photographs. Individuals should be clearly identifiable and prominently featured, and must meet acceptable grooming standards.

a. Digital imagery to accompany the biographical forms may be sent electronically to the FHTNC via e-mail at fhtn@navy.mil or on a disk and mailed if there are a significant number of photos. Imagery should be 5 X 7, 300 DPI. Each image should be

labeled with the command UIC and the last five digits of the service member's SSN (XXXXX-XXXXX).

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b. Hard copy photographs must be a good quality black-and-white or color image. Prints should be labeled with the command UIC and the SNM's last five numbers of his/her SSN (XXXXX-XXXXX) on the back of the photograph.

10. Reserve personnel. FHTN releases on reservists are processed in the same manner as active duty members.

11. Point of contact. FHTN forms and news release material should be mailed to:

Director, Fleet Hometown News Program
9420 Third Ave, Ste 100
Norfolk, VA 23511-2125

Message stories, updates and casualty reports may be sent to:
FHTN NORFOLK VA//00//
Or fax: (757) 445-7782 or (757) 445-2085

For answers to questions, call:

(757) 444-4199 ext 343 or 328

DSN 564-4199 ext 343 or 328

Or email: fhtn@navy.mil

Or see:

<http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/chinfo/fhtnc/index.htm>

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T. L. McCREARY
Chief of Information

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